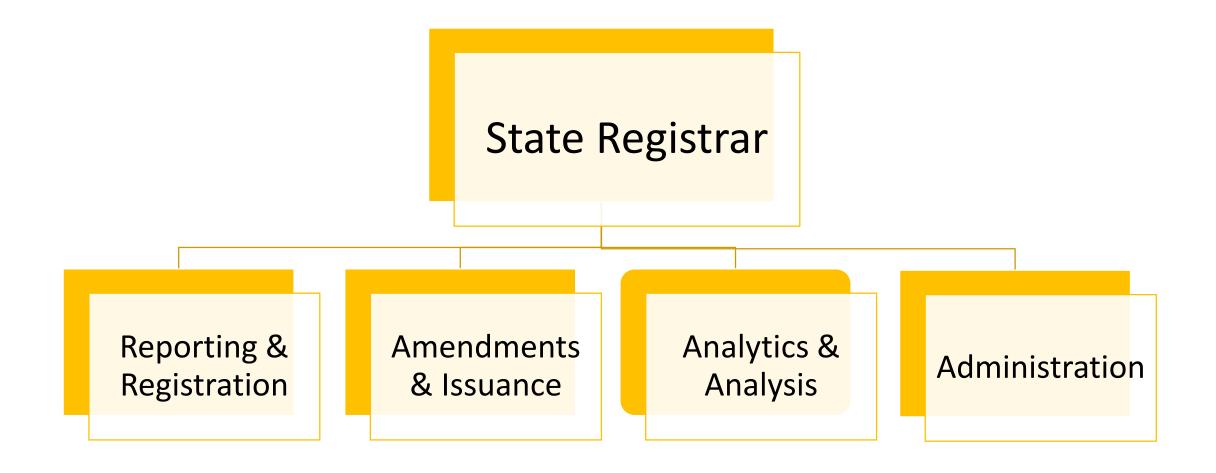
Vital Statistics During the COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 & Death Registration



DSHS Vital Statistics Section



The Death Certificate



The Death Certificate Process

- A death occurs. A death certificate must be filed within 10 days.
- Authorized data providers (usually Funeral Director and MD) complete death certificate in 2 parts.
 - Demographics/Disposition
 - Medical
- State reviews and registers death certificate as legal document, and routes to local registrar for local review and registration.
- The death certificate is now a vital record, ready for issuance as certified copies and data files to fulfill legal, administrative, and public health purposes.



Why the Death Certificate Matters - I

- Families to obtain closure and settle estates
 - Claim life insurance
 - Close utilities and bank accounts

- Government agencies to prevent fraud
 - Stop pension and public assistance payments
 - Reduce fraudulent use of birth certificates, voter registration, and driver's licenses



Mortality and cause of death statistics come directly from death certificates.



Why the Death Certificate Matters - II

- Death Certificates are used to calculate mortality statistics.
- Mortality data is used to guide public health research, public policy, funding allocations, and emergency response.
- Death Certificates are used to track deaths due to specific causes and in specific geographic locations for surveillance, outbreaks, and emergencies.
- Accurate and complete reporting ensures effective public health programs and policies aimed to prevent deaths.



The Death Certificate

1. Fact of Death

- Demographic information
- Time and place of death
- Next of kin information
- Location of final disposition

2. Cause of Death

- Cause and manner of death
- Autopsy information
- Tobacco use

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The Death Certificate – Cause of Death

CAUSE OF DEATH	33. PART 1. ENTER THE CHAIN OF EVENTS - DISEASES, INJURIES, OR COMPLICATIONS - THAT DIRECTLY CAUSED THE DEATH. DO NOT ENTER TERMINAL EVENTS SUCH AS CARDIAC ARREST, RESPIRATORY ARREST, OR VENTRICULAR FIBRILLATION WITHOUT SHOWING THE ETIOLOGY. DO NOT ABBREVIATE. ENTER ONLY ONE CAUSE ON EACH LINE.							
	IMMEDIATE CAUSE (Final disease or condition	a Due to (or as a consequence of):						
	Sequentially list conditions, if any, leading to the cause listed on line a. Enter the UNDERLYING CAUSE (disease or injury that initiated the events resulting in death) LAST.	Due to (or as a consequence of):						
		d. Due to (or as a consequence of):						
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Guidelines on Completing COD Section

- 1. The COD section is divided into two parts Part 1 and Part 2 and follows the national standard set by the CDC.
- 2. The cause of death in Part 1 should read like a story in reverse order the first line is *due to* the second, which is *due to* the third.
- 3. Part 1(a) must be completed with the immediate cause of death, which is the specific condition that happened right before the patient's death.
- 4. The underlying cause of death would be recorded on the lowest used line.
- 5. The underlying cause is the condition that started the chain of events leading to death, and is what drives mortality statistics on leading causes of death.



Death Certificates during COVID-19



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 - Demographics/Disposition
 - Medical
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CDC Guidance on Reporting COVID-19

- CDC issued informal guidance in March and the "Guidance for Certifying Deaths due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)" in April.
- The guidance follows general CDC guidance on death reporting.
- "If COVID-19 played a role in the death, this condition should be specified on the death certificate."
- "All causal sequences reported in Part I should be logical in terms of time and pathology."
- "Ideally, testing for COVID-19 should be conducted, but it is acceptable
 to report COVID-19 on a death certificate without this confirmation if
 the circumstances are compelling within a reasonable degree of
 certainty."

Texas communications with medical certifiers

- TxEVER application updated.
- TxEVER resources page updated.
- Field Services death certificate training program updated.
- VSS worked with Texas Medical Association to distribute CDC guidance and materials to its members.
- VSS notified Medical Examiner and JP offices directly.
- In the case of death due to COVID-19, the manner of death is almost always natural.



CDC FAQs on "Understanding the Numbers"

- The death certificate as a data source is not commonly understood.
- The death certificate as official source of mortality statistics predates COVID-19.
- The death certificate process has not changed.
- Death certificates take time to be completed.
- Causes of death are conditions that caused or contributed to death not all conditions the decedent had.
- States have regularly reported all deaths to CDC for many years.
- States report deaths at different rates.
- CDC assigns ICD-10 codes to causes of death for reporting purposes.



Understanding the Numbers in Texas

- Vital Statistics is continuity of operations, not emergency response.
- Laboratory and Infectious Disease Services leads the COVID-19 response under the DSHS Commissioner, including data reporting.
- Before July 27, DSHS counted COVID-19 fatalities as they were reported publicly by local and regional health departments after they received a notification and verified the death.
- On July 27, DSHS changed its method to use death certificates.
- A fatality is counted as due to COVID-19 when the medical certifier determines COVID-19 directly caused death. This method does not include deaths of people who had COVID-19 but died of an unrelated cause.



